



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation  
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Michael F. Easley  
 Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.  
 Secretary, DENR

# PACs CONNECT PARKS, CITIZENS

Before April 6, this group of people knew each other just informally. They did share a common, though vaguely defined, love of nature, conservation, the mountains and the idea of a new state park unit in Watauga and Ashe counties.

On that date, they became a force to be considered as the Elk Knob State Natural Area Park Advisory Committee.

It's somewhat of a milestone for a new state park unit – and for its superintendent

– when a park advisory committee is formed. What was once just a vision for conservation suddenly takes shape with a firm sense of purpose, organization, bylaws and a mission. After the excitement of grants and land dedications comes the nuts and bolts of master planning, park rules and getting new trails and picnic sites on the ground.

A citizens park advisory committee is a key part of that process.

A park advisory commit-

tee exists for every state park and state recreation area and those state natural areas with on-site staff. Each has a long list of duties, but the core of its mission is to act as a sounding board for the park and for the state parks system within the community and to be an advocate for the park.

“When this park started unfolding, it was one of the most exciting things in my experience. I’m just excited to be part of it,” said educator Patricia Beaver as

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*Campers enjoy one of the 51 new sites at the recently expanded campground at Stone Mountain State Park. The state parks system dedicated the new facilities in April. See story on Page 5.*

## CONSERVATION AWARD PRESENTED TO DIVISION

The Conservation Trust of North Carolina, representing the state’s 24 land trusts, presented the Division of Parks and Recreation with the 2005 Government Conservation Partner of the Year Award on April 20.

The award honors the agency’s work in aggressively planning for the state’s future recreation needs by strategically identifying and vigorously pursuing new state parks where there are still available natural lands.

The award is given each year to a state or federal government entity to recognize exemplary work in partnering with local and regional land trusts to protect land and water resources.

The division moved quickly and decisively

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## ALLCOX IS LAW ENFORCEMENT SPECIALIST

Angelia Allcox, superintendent at Singletary Lake State Park for the past five years, has been named the law enforcement specialist for the division. In that position in the chief ranger's office, Allcox will assist in law enforcement training and operations for the division's staff of about 180 commissioned rangers and superintendents.

Allcox attended high school in Hillsborough and graduated from Randolph Community College and from UNC at Wilmington with a bachelor's

degree in leisure services and natural resource management.

She joined the division in 1996 at Falls Lake State Recreation Area and later was promoted to Park Ranger II and then to Park Ranger III at that post. She is a certified environmental educator and a prescribed burn boss.



**Willard Dove** was hired at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area as a General Utility

Worker. He has more than four years of related experience and is a graduate of Bladenboro High School.

**Stephen R. Tillotson** is a new Park Ranger II at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. He graduated from Fayetteville Academy and earned a bachelor's degree in biological sciences and environmental studies from Wake Forest University. He has experience with the Western North Carolina Nature Center in Asheville.

**Anthony Brinegar** is the new Maintenance Mechanic II at New River State Park. He is a graduate of Ashe Central High School and his related work experience includes a position with the N.C. Department of Transportation.

**Daniel Baumgardner** joined the staff of Mount Mitchell State Park as a Maintenance Mechanic II. He brings with him more than five years of related experience including positions with the Blue Ridge Parkway and the City of Hickory.

**Thomas Tatum** is a new General Utility Worker at Singletary Lake State Park. He is a graduate of East Bladen High School and has more than three years of related experience including employment with the state Department of Transportation.

### From The Director's Desk

It was quite an honor to represent us all in Salter Path recently as the Division was presented with the 2005 Government Conservation Partner of the Year Award by the Conservation Trust of North Carolina (Story on Page 1).

Just a few days later, Governor Mike Easley proclaimed the first week of May as State Employee Recognition Week.

There's a definite relationship between the two events. The state parks system has a tall order in its mission to conserve and protect the best of North Carolina's natural resources and to be there to help in the enjoyment of and education about those resources. I very much agree with Secretary Bill Ross' opinion in his note to DENR employees that it requires us all to "work hard, work together and work smart."

Being recognized by our land trust partners in conservation is gratifying. It gives us reason to believe we're doing many of the right things. It also reinforces my belief that among the thousands of hard-working state employees, our folks are among the best of the best. The conservation award is just one more reflection of your hard work and dedication. And, this type of recognition goes beyond the success our employees enjoy in operating a top-notch state parks system.

As we begin the traditional summer season when our parks are often at their busiest, it's a good time to extend my thanks and congratulations on jobs well done every day in the state parks.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

### LET US KNOW...

...ABOUT THE EVENTS  
GOING ON IN YOUR PARK  
OR PROGRAM SO WE CAN  
TELL ABOUT IT IN  
**THE STEWARD**

# REI GRANTS PROMOTE STEWARDSHIP

The development of a slice of piedmont prairie and improvements to campgrounds and picnic areas will result from four \$10,000 stewardship grants being made to North Carolina state parks by Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI), a retail cooperative for outdoor gear and clothing.

The grants are being channeled through the statewide Friends of State Parks and the Eno River Association to Eno River, William B. Umstead and Crowders Mountain state parks and Falls Lake State Recreation Area.

To celebrate its most successful year ever, Washington state-based REI dedicated \$1 million through 100 grants to parks across the country. Grant recipients were selected after REI employees identified parks that were of particular interest to their customers, offered outdoor recreation opportunities and were in close proximity to an REI store.

In North Carolina, the cooperative has stores in Cary, Raleigh, Durham and Charlotte.

"REI has always been highly regarded and should be applauded for its corporate ethic of stewardship, and we're honored that the state parks have this opportunity to partner with REI on projects to enhance our natural resources and improve recreation," said Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation.

For each of the grants Friends of State Parks and the Eno River Association worked closely with park staff to develop meaningful projects. Those are:

-- Crowders Mountain: A two-acre prairie restoration project will develop a unique ecosystem that once was common, but is now rare, in the western

piedmont. A stand of Virginia pines will be replaced by native grasses, asters and other herbaceous species.

-- Falls Lake: Outdoor fire rings will be added to newly developed group campsites at Shinleaf Campground, and an amphitheater will be built at the Beaverdam day use area.

-- Eno River: A campground will be developed in the Bobbit Hole/Piper Creek vicinity of the Cole Mill Access. This will offer the first camping facilities in a very scenic area of the park.

-- William B. Umstead: Large and small picnic areas will be renovated at the Reedy Creek section of the park to include gravel pads, grills and bicycle racks.

A principal component of all the projects is to use volunteer labor as much as is practical. REI is encouraging its members and employees to become involved as volunteers in these grant projects and in other stewardship projects at community parks.

"Last year, REI supported environmental stewardship

projects with 572,000 volunteer hours of sweat equity," said REI President and CEO Sally Jewell. "By extending \$1 million for parks around the country, we'll continue to help ensure that community parks remain a vital and valued resource."

These latest community park grants are in addition to more than \$3 million in grants REI previously earmarked this year for outdoor recreation and conservation causes.

"REI had an amazing 2005," Jewell said. "As a co-op we share our success with our members, employees and the communities in which we do business. I can't think of a better way to celebrate our success than by dedicating an additional \$1 million to support our community parks in every community in which REI has a presence across the country."

In addition to financial and gear grants, REI offers outdoor resource centers at each retail store with information on local organizations and volunteer opportunities for REI members.



## HAMMOCKS BEACH JUNIOR RANGERS

*Hammocks Beach State Park recently inducted its first set of Junior Rangers using a new teaching program. The 4-H Dragonfly group from Hickory attended four interpretive programs and completed four activities and a service project under the direction of Ranger Sam Bland, left.*



# KEY MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA LINK OPENS

A partnership of public agencies and volunteer organizations dedicated a critical and especially scenic western link of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail in northern McDowell County May 6.

About 40 people attended the dedication, which followed a May 5 meeting of the North Carolina Trails Committee.

The 10.5-mile section completes a 210-mile footpath segment of the trail stretching from US 74 and the Blue Ridge Parkway, at Balsam Gap, in the west, to US 321 and the Blue Ridge Parkway near Blowing Rock to the east.

The project was accomplished through cooperative efforts of the U.S. Forest Service, volunteer trail-building organizations including the Central Blue Ridge Task Force and the statewide Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail and the Division of Parks and Recreation.

The newest link incorporates a 200-foot-long footbridge across the North Fork of the Catawba River as it rises across Pisgah National Forest lands to the Pinnacle at the edge of Linville Gorge Wilderness.

The western terminus crosses the river near the U.S. Forest Service work center at Woodlawn and its eastern terminus is at the Pinnacle Parking Area on Old NC 105 north of Lake James.

The trail segment offers spectacular scenery including vistas of Mt. Mitchell and Lake James, and was built by trail volunteers. The footbridge was primarily funded by the Division of Parks and Recreation's State Trails Program through grants from the federal Recreational Trails Program.

Matching funds were provided by the Grandfather Ranger District of the U.S. Forest



*Members of the Central Blue Ridge Task Force at the bridge on the Catawba River.*

Service and Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

"In western North Carolina, this 210-mile segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail is second only to the 310 miles of Appalachian Trail in the state," said Darrell McBane, chief of the state trails program. "If the two were linked near Clingman's Dome and possibly near Ashe County, we'd have the longest loop trail in the eastern United States. That's an outstanding goal for trail builders and land managers and should be an inspiration for further partnerships."

In a message to the Central Blue Ridge Task Force, Bill Ross, Secretary of DENR, offered his thanks for all the volunteer efforts.

"We realize the state cannot successfully plan, build and manage this statewide trails system alone," Ross said. "We must have partners who share this vision and that are willing to commit time and resources to make trails, greenways and blueways a part of the local community that will serve as segments of a greater state trails system."

Following the dedication ceremonies, volunteers led attendees on a 6.5-mile hike to the summit of Bald Knob.

The Mountains-to-Sea Trail was envisioned in 1977 as a walking route from the Great Smoky Mountains to Nags Head, with the planned corridors rambling nearly 1,000 miles across the state. Trail planners hope that it will eventually form the backbone of an extensive trail network throughout the state.

Most of the completed trail is on public land in western North Carolina, though momentum for trail construction is growing in the Haw River vicinity of the piedmont and along the Neuse River corridor in the east.



*Following the dedication, many attendees participated in a 6.5-mile hike.*

# CAMPGROUND DEDICATED AT STONE MTN.

On a half dozen camping trips from his home in Connecticut to Stone Mountain State Park, Jim Hopper watched carefully as construction progressed on a major expansion project at the park's campground.

After witnessing the campground's dedication April 28, Hopper said, "There are just some things about it that are excellent, but it's not going to stay a secret very long."

Indeed, the campground was filling rapidly during the Friday afternoon dedication ceremony.

Park Superintendent Ed Farr said that there had already been more than 800 registrations for the 51 new campsites since the expansion was opened to the public in November. On Easter weekend, the 88-site campground was filled.

The project represents an investment of \$2.8 million at North Carolina's second-largest state park. It was funded through the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

Of the 51 new sites, 41 offer water and electric hookups for recreational vehicles. A second, paved camping loop was created, and the project includes a new 1,500-square-foot washhouse, an entrance station and new utility systems for the entire recreation facility.

Each of the new campsites offers a paved driveway, 750-square-foot campsite pad with fine gravel and grill ring, lantern post and picnic table. The campground has two fully accessible sites for the disabled.

"Stone Mountain has long been one of our most popular state parks because of its wealth of natural resources and stunning scenery," said Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of



*Juanita Royal, former owner of the property cuts the ribbon to dedicate an expanded campground at Stone Mountain.*

Parks and Recreation. "This new campground facility will allow more citizens and visitors to our state to enjoy the complete Stone Mountain experience."

Ledford said he remembers that visitors camped at sites scattered along the park's main road for years after the park was dedicated in 1969. As visitation grew dramatically, the campground, which was built in 1984, usually filled early on summer weekends and holidays.

The park recorded 378,312 visits in 2005.

Ledford said that the park staff and contractors were tenacious in getting the project completed, and said that the General Assembly also must get credit for its support of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, a portion of which is dedicated to state parks capital projects.

He told the visitors at the dedication ceremony, "Remember to take time to say thanks to some of those folks when you see them for what they've done for the state parks system."

Another speaker was Bob Bamberg, executive director of the Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce, who noted that Stone Mountain has always been

important to that county's efforts to build a tourism industry and that improvements are noticed.

"I've done a lot of camping and believe in its recreational and spiritual benefits," Bamberg said. "But, the experience is greatly enhanced when you've got a hot shower with it."

Construction on the expansion project began in the summer of 2005, under the direction of Alan Jeffreys of the parks system's design and development office. Design was by ADW Architects of Charlotte, and the contractor was Hickory Construction Company, Inc.

Farr said that Art Bell of Hickory Construction was especially helpful in tackling the challenging project. He also noted that the park's maintenance staff under Darrell Richardson built a new entrance station for the campground and helped with the expansion infrastructure.

The maintenance staff continues to work on the site of an amphitheater in the campground complex, Farr said.

A ribbon was cut to officially dedicate the project by Juanita Royal, whose family's homestead was located at the campground site.



*Ranger Christopher Ammon of Eno River State Park leads other rangers and instructors on a mock interpretive hike. Each ranger is critiqued on the preparation and presentation of an interpretive program during the four-day training seminar.*



## RANGERS LEARN INTERPRETIVE SKILLS

By Marti Kane  
Education Specialist

Basic Interpretive Training, along with Basic Law Enforcement Training and Environmental Education Certification, are "rites of passage" for every state park ranger.

Thirteen of the state parks system's newest rangers completed one of those important steps April 6, completing the Basic Interpretive Training curriculum. This year, The Summit Environmental Education Center at Haw River State Park provided an ideal setting for training that

is spread across four days.

An essential job function of every North Carolina state park ranger is interpretation – educating the public about the natural resources they're experiencing in informal, outdoor settings.

Although rangers provide a good deal of environmental education for school classes and other organized groups, another aspect of their job is interpretation for families and other visitors who come to state parks with recreation in mind.

Scott Daughtry, retired south district superintendent,

emphasized this as the keynote speaker this year. "Ranger Scott," as he is known, told of the proud tradition of interpretation in our state parks system.

Rangers must be skilled in communicating interpretive messages in entertaining and inspiring ways, he said. This is just as important as knowing how to use defensive equipment or conducting a search and rescue operation.

In Basic Interpretive Training, rangers work in small groups with other rangers from around the state. They are videotaped and critiqued by their peers as they deliver a 10-minute interpretive talk on some aspect of their park's natural or cultural history.

They learn the importance of using a theme to create a message that park visitors will remember. They also practice techniques for leading the public on nature walks. Rangers must pay close attention to group safety, the individual needs of visitors with disabilities and protection of the resource being interpreted. That's a lot to juggle all at one time.



*One of several groups stops to analyze the training session.*

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# SKILLS

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A highlight of the training is creative programming where rangers try their hands at puppetry, music, games and costumed interpretation. Stomach muscles get a good workout from all the belly laughs.

This year, the rangers also enjoyed working with Division Director Lewis Ledford and the resource management biologists to integrate the division's management philosophy and mission statement into interpretive messages. That's some serious business, but it lit a fire of inspiration under the new rangers.

Basic Interpretive Training is organized and led by the division's five interpretation and education specialists. After our rangers complete this training, they continue to refine their skills in Advanced Interpretive Training. This involves a series of one-day workshops led by various division experts and held in locations around the state. Topics include storytelling, powerpoint, photoshop, advanced butterfly identification, invasive species, cultural resources and the like.

Graduates of this year's training are Lora Manning (Pettigrew), Christopher Ammon (Eno River), Janet Braddy (Falls Lake), Kristen Brigner (Umstead), Michael Willaford (Falls Lake), Brandy Belville (Morrow Mountain), Billy Hartness (Weymouth Woods), Matt Amadon (Stone Mountain), Mary Berrier (Gorges), Crystal Dillard (New River), Glen George (Crowders Mountain), Katharine McPhail and Matt Schnabel (both from South Mountains).



(Photo courtesy of The Jefferson Post.)

## STORYTELLER HICKS HELPS RANGERS HONE THEIR SKILLS

By Marti Kane  
Education Specialist

On April 12, master storyteller Orville Hicks wove his magic at an Advanced Interpretive Training workshop on storytelling at New River State Park. West district rangers who attended the six-hour workshop were spellbound as Hicks spun a series of "Jack tales."

Hicks grew up near Beech Mountain in Watauga County in a much simpler time before television and computers. He learned a vast repertoire of mountain stories from his mother, Sarah Harmon Hicks, and his cousin, the late Ray Hicks, a famous storyteller in his own right.

Orville Hicks has received several awards for his contributions to the preservation of North Carolina mountain folklore.

This advanced workshop was led by rangers Jeff Matheson and Tracy Minton and Larry Hyde, superintendent

at Crowders Mountain State Park. Minton demonstrated his skills as a musician by telling the tragic saga of Tom Dooley through song and story.

Hyde provided an animated telling of several Native American tales, and Matheson guided workshop participants in developing stories of their own. The result of all this training may be some great campfire tales from budding storytellers in the west district.

Advanced Interpretive Training is a series of eight, one-day workshops held within a two-hour drive of each park. Rangers create their own professional training plans by choosing workshops that will be most beneficial to their career development.

Each workshop provides advanced instruction and practice in interpretive techniques such as storytelling, bird identification, photography, PowerPoint, Photoshop, cultural resources, museum curation, trail design and more.



*Hanging Rock State Park Ranger Matt Windsor, right, kept preschoolers entranced while a film crew recorded for the popular "Smart Start Kids" program.*



## HANGING ROCK HELPS SMART START

A visit to Hanging Rock State Park was a touching experience for a group of preschoolers and a production crew for "Smart Start Kids."

Ranger Matt Windsor led his young charges on a tactile nature hike, having them touch a tortoise shell, deer antlers, snake skins and even the bark of a few of the park's hardwood trees.

They smelled and listened to the park environment as Windsor answered many impromptu questions and gently drove home a few lessons about the environment.

"He was just fantastic," Walters, one of the show's producers, said of Windsor. "This is the first time we've been on a hike with a ranger and I'd like to consider other parks that we could visit for other segments."

Walters and the Stokes Partnership for Children arranged the Hanging Rock location for the popular kids show that is produced by WRAL in Raleigh and airs on that station as well as most UNC-TV affiliates throughout the state.

With host Willa Brigham, the show exposes children ages 3-5 to the wonders of their world and gives kids across North Carolina a chance to be stars for a few hours. "We try to model best practices for early childhood education in a way that families can enjoy," Walters said.

Prior to Windsor's nature hike, the preschoolers sat on the porch of the park's visitor center and got a lesson in playing spoons for folk songs from Stokes County native Franklin Gordon.

The Hanging Rock segments were scheduled to air in May or June.

## JOHN HUMPHREY GIVEN STANBACK AWARD

The Conservation Trust of North Carolina, representing the state's 24 land trusts, recognized John Humphrey's outstanding commitment to conservation and years of dedicated service to Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy with the Stanback Conservationist of the Year Award, one of its most prestigious awards, on April 20.

"Clean water, clean air, natural habitat, and scenic beauty are just some of the resources future generations of North Carolinians will enjoy because of John Humphrey's efforts," said Reid Wilson, executive director of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina.

The Stanback Conservationist award is given annually to an individual who has shown a sustained and outstanding commitment to land trusts and conservation in North Carolina. The award is named

for Fred and Alice Stanback of Salisbury, who have helped to preserve thousands of acres of natural forests in western North Carolina.

Humphrey and his wife Ruth purchased a 181-acre farm near Mills River in the late 1960s. For more than 30 years they have committed themselves to stewarding the land for conservation through selective logging and planting techniques, erosion control, and restoration of a degraded bog.

In 1996, the Humphreys became the first landowners to donate a conservation agreement to Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy. Humphrey became a trustee of the conservancy that year and served as its president from 1998-01 and from 2003-05. He has attended every national and state land trust conference since 1997.

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# MUDPUPPY CREATES NEW RIVER STIR

By Ranger Doug Blatny  
New River State Park

On March 16, local anglers Curtis Gentry and Fred Fogel caught an unidentified creature in the New River. The men contacted New River State Park to help identify the specimen.

After taking photos, rangers Doug Blatny and Jeff Matheson were still unsure whether the animal was a common mudpuppy (*Necturus m. maculosus*) or an immature hellbender (*Cryptobranchus a. alleganiensis*) because both are medium-to-large salamanders.

The hellbender is known to be native to the New River, however, the common mudpuppy has not been recorded in the North Carolina section of the river. Lori Williams, a nongame biologist with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, was contacted. Upon viewing the photos, she determined the salamander was in fact a common mudpuppy.

This is the first record of a common mudpuppy in the New River in North Carolina. The French Broad drainage and the New River now hold the distinction of being the only two river systems in the state that the mudpuppy is known to inhabit.

Both hellbenders and common mudpuppies are aquatic salamanders, gray to brown in color. They feed on small fish, crayfish, worms and aquatic insects. Both may live in fast-flowing, cool and unpolluted rivers or streams that have abundant flat rocks for cover and nesting. Common mudpuppies may also live in clean lakes and ponds.

## AWARD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Most recently, John and Ruth Humphrey put up \$500,000 of their personal assets to help save the "World's Edge" property, a nationally significant natural heritage site, for a newly authorized state park at Hickory Nut Gorge in Rutherford County.

In June 2005, a developer made an offer to buy the 1,568-acre property. The conservancy acted quickly to submit a more attractive offer and put together \$16 million to close the deal.

John and Ruth Humphrey joined several conservancy trustees who put up their own assets to guarantee a loan for part of the \$16 million. Humphrey, in particular, exceeded the call of duty by offering a lien on his beloved Mills River farm as collateral.



*The mudpuppy is a rare aquatic salamander.*

There are distinct differences between the two unique salamanders. The common mudpuppy grows to about 10-13 inches long. It has a more slender body, is not very slimy and has external gills, which it uses to extract oxygen from the water.

The hellbender is the largest salamander found in the North Carolina mountains. It can achieve a length of 12-29 inches and can live up to 50 years. The hellbender is slimy and has a wide flat body and wrinkly skin, which it uses to breathe.

Past generations of anglers believed the hellbender and the common mudpuppy to be voracious predators of fish, dangerous to touch and capable of a venomous bite. To the contrary, because they mainly feed on crayfish, they are not significant predators of game fish and possess neither a venomous bite nor poisonous skin.

Based on their rarity and vulnerability to human influences, both salamanders are listed as North Carolina species of Special Concern. Factors affecting these sensitive salamanders and their chances for long-term survival include stream sedimentation (which is a growing problem along the New River), industrial and agricultural pollution, damming of rivers and fishing-related mortality.

Both animal populations have decreased because of these habitat pressures. Due to their listing as species of special concern, it is illegal to possess either animal.

Anglers using live bait who encounter a common mudpuppy or hellbender are advised to carefully remove the hook or cut the line as close to the mouth as possible, and then release the animal back into the river.

New River State Park rangers have asked anglers in the New River to report any findings of either salamander in order to help protect the species and their habitat.

# TRUST FUND PROVIDES 41 LOCAL GRANTS

Competition among local governments for grants from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund is growing very keen with 86 applications for the \$13.53 million in grants that were awarded May 11 by the Parks and Recreation Authority.

The grant total was a record for the first three quarters of any fiscal year since the grant program was launched in 1995. However, the record number of applications asked for \$27.2 million.

Jonathan Howes, authority chairman, told a group of applicants who showed up personally at William B. Umstead State Park for the meeting, that the authority was painfully aware some worthy projects would not be funded.

He reminded the representatives of towns and counties that a smaller round of grants – using fourth-quarter 2005-06 revenues – will be made in July, and he encouraged them to apply again next year if necessary.

“The thing that makes us happiest is being able to fund projects for local governments in North Carolina,” Howes said.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund is supported by revenues from the state’s tax on real estate sales. By law, 35 percent of the fund is earmarked for grants to local governments for park acquisition, development and renovation. Most of the remainder pays for state park capital projects and land acquisition.



## NEW RIVER VISITOR CENTER

*Construction crews mount the rafter system on a new visitor center at the US 221 Access of New River State Park. The project also includes new picnic grounds and a tent-and-trailer campground.*



*Robin Capps, left, former grant analyst for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, was honored by the Parks and Recreation Authority May 11. Chairman Jonathan Howes presented her with a framed photograph of Mount Mitchell taken by authority member Wendell Begley.*

The program has become extremely popular, with grants reaching into 98 of the state’s 100 counties.

Since 1995, the authority has awarded 473 grants worth \$88.3 million, but there have been 800 applications asking for \$148 million.

Each grant is matched dollar-for-dollar by the local governments.

The maximum grant amount was raised a year ago from \$250,000 to \$500,000. Among the 41 grants awarded May 11, 19 were for that maximum amount. Some of those ambitious projects came from quite small towns such as Red Oak in Nash County, Angier in Harnett County and Oak Ridge in Guilford County.

The smallest grant amount this year was \$8,000 for a county park in Pamlico County.

Applications are scored on objective criteria by staff of the Division of Parks and Recreation, which administers the program. However, authority members are not bound to award grants strictly on the basis of that scoring.

Several authority members expressed disappointment that projects that appeared worthy were not supported by sufficient long-range planning.

Howes noted that field staff of NSCU’s Recreation Resource Services, which is a contract consultant for the grant program, can help local governments correct such weak points in applications.





*Classroom sessions, above, were combined with hands-on training at the seminar. At left, a new confined-space work and rescue system gets a workout.*



## ***SAFETY FOCUS OF MAINTENANCE SEMINAR***

By Johnny Johnson  
East District Maintenance Supervisor

The focus for the division's 2006 Maintenance Seminar April 2-6 was safety, with sessions led by instructors from the N.C. Department of Labor and the N.C. Industrial Commission.

The parks system's maintenance staff routinely performs tasks that are inherently dangerous and/or life threatening if not done with the proper training, personal protective equipment and properly maintained tools.

The training that the maintenance mechanics received at the seminar will enable them to better identify dangers and unsafe conditions, take the proper corrective actions to eliminate or prevent those dangers or unsafe conditions and to train other staff members in proper safety techniques.

Department of Labor instructors taught a

10-hour Occupational Safety and Health course for general industry. The course covered topics such as hazard communications, electrical safety, the proper use of personal protective equipment, inspection and safe use of hand and power tools, machine guarding, storage of hazardous materials, fire and life safety and welding safety.

Training classes by the Industrial Commission focused on fall protection, confined space safety, lockout-tagout procedures and the importance of a good safety attitude.

The maintenance seminar involved 48 staff members and was staged at The Summit at Haw River State Park by the division's maintenance council. Current members besides myself are: Jerry Howerton, the division chief of maintenance, Darren Fulcher, Dwayne Parker, Scott Taylor, Jason Lunsford, Richard Smith, Wayne Rouse, Darrel Richardson, Tim Smith, Jackie Culphier and Andy Griffith.



*The maintenance seminar at The Summit at Haw River involved 48 division staff members.*



# ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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the committee held its first meeting in a classroom of Appalachian State University.

That enthusiasm and Beaver's reputation as a conservationist were reasons why Park Superintendent Larry Trivette approached her to serve along with six others. The volunteer group also includes a teacher, a retired professor, a business owner and the retired superintendent of New River State Park, Jay Wild.

Advisory committee members are appointed by the director of the Division of Parks and Recreation on the recommendation of the park superintendent.

"They all had already been active in the park's creation, so it made sense to make contact with them when forming the committee," Trivette said. "I think they'll all help bring more attention to the park and help the surrounding communities be more aware of what we're doing."

Trivette gave each a manual to help explain their role. It includes a history of Elk Knob in the park system, an update on plans for the park and some details of the inner workings of the state parks system.

Lewis Ledford, division director, told the group, "It's good to hear this kind of passion in the room and excitement about what's going on at Elk Knob."

Advisory committees can have considerable influence on how a park develops, on how it operates and on how it's perceived in the community, Ledford said. "Citizens need to be informed and they can speak out, once informed. But, it's important for you to have

an appreciation of what you want to accomplish and to have feedback on the needs here and proposed park plans."

Wild told the group, "I can appreciate what Larry needs from this committee. It's kind of fun to see it from this side of the table."

## Advocates at hand

When Wild came to Ashe County as a superintendent, New River State Park was being created and no system of

park advisory committees was in place. Fortunately, advocates for the park were organized as the National Committee for the New River and New River Community Partners.

Those groups were already acting as a valuable liaison between the state parks system and a community that was sometimes wary of the state's intentions, Wild said.

"An advisory commit-

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## PACs HAVE MANY DUTIES

The primary function of a state park advisory committee is to advise and make recommendations to the park superintendent and the division director, and it's overriding mission is "to establish understanding, appreciation and support for state parks at the local, regional and state level."

A division handbook on committee procedures suggests that advisory committees have at least seven members and to the extent possible, its membership should represent these community aspects: local government, user groups, education, business, conservation, senior citizen and park/recreation agencies.

It also lists "basic functions" of a committee, and those include:

- To investigate and determine the needs and interests of the community for recreation programs and facilities and make recommendations.
- To inform and interpret the needs of the general public to the superintendent.
- To serve as a forum for innovative ideas, concepts, programs, policies and procedures.
- To help the park evaluate programs and activities.
- To help secure a comprehensive master plan and other pertinent studies for planning, acquisition, development and management of natural resources.
- To help the park develop cooperative arrangements with business, other organizations and private groups.
- To recommend and advise on the acceptance of any grant, gift, contribution or donation to the park.
- To generally work toward a favorable public opinion of, and support for, state park resources and services.
- To assist the park in recruiting volunteer staff to work with park activities.
- To assist the park in developing program priorities.
- To assist in matters relating to maintaining the highest standards of professional park and recreation leadership.

# ADVISORY COMMITTEES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

tee can go back and present the face of state parks in their community. About equally, they can impress on the state legislature how important a park is to the community and how much it's needed," he said.

That was key when park advisory committees were created for all parks in anticipation of North Carolina's first bond referendum for state parks in 1993.

The committees were viewed as an important source of grassroots support for the bond issue and also for the establishment of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund a year later. By involving a cross-section of community leaders in the committees, the state parks system was able to tell its message to business, education, local government and conservation constituencies.

## Roles refined

In 1993 and 1994, the parks system held seminars for all park advisory committees and refined the role of the committees.

Some "basic functions" were defined and still include:

- To investigate and determine the needs and interests of the community for recreation programs and facilities and make recommendations.

- To serve as a forum for innovative ideas, concepts, programs, policies and procedures.

- To help the park evaluate programs and activities.

- To help secure a comprehensive master plan and other pertinent studies for planning, acquisition, development and management of natural resources.

- To help the park develop cooperative arrangements

with business, other organizations and private groups.

Advisory committees seldom make major decisions about park operations, but frequently are involved in actions leading to major decisions, and they are responsible for advising on the basic policies and planning that guide the state park.

Even though their recommendations are not binding, park advisory committees can become deeply involved in some complex park-related issues.

At William B. Umstead State Park, the committee regularly deals with issues involving its neighbors – commercial development and subdivisions, an active stone quarry, interstate highways and its largest neighbor, Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

At Eno River State Park, issues of drought-era water levels and highway construction can be on the agenda.

And, at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, committee members came under intense public scrutiny when the park opted to limit access to a popular four-wheel-drive beach.

Many state parks have active friends groups that act as advocacy organizations and which can allow for private donations to add to a park's programs or facilities. And, there is often some overlap of membership among the friends groups and advisory committees.

This can create a positive synergy for conservation and park development, making each group more effective.

At Lumber River State Park, the park itself was predated by the Lumber River Basin Committee, which had worked

for years to earn a state "natural and scenic" designation for the river and for authorization of a state park.

## Active fundraising

When Superintendent James Sessoms arrived in 1993 as the park's first staff member, this network of supporters already in place morphed into the first park advisory committee (though members prefer to call it the Lumber River Citizens Advisory Committee). Many of them have remained on the committee since that time under long-time Chairman Whith Gibson.

Sessoms said the committee has always been aggressive in guiding the park's development, finding \$40,000 in private funding for a master plan and creating the Lumber River Conservancy as a spin-off group that targets land acquisition.

The group also raised \$50,000 for a teaching video that it placed in every school, college and library in a four-county area, and it's newest project is an interactive CD of the park's developing Environmental Education Learning Experience.

"They have determination, focus and a good sense of community. It's a large group and tied into all aspects of the community," Sessoms said. "They've worked behind the scenes for about every issue that's come up."

Sessoms said the committee actively seeks projects it can tackle and is recognized as an important force in the community.

"They're always there and available to me for help," he said.

# McELHONE TO LEAD FORT FISHER

Sean McElhone, formerly a ranger at Jones Lake State Park, has been promoted to superintendent of Fort Fisher State Recreation Area in New Hanover County. McElhone succeeds Mike Seigh, who retired after 31 years with the state parks system.

The superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

McElhone has been a Park Ranger III at Jones Lake State Park in Bladen County since February 2005. A native of Pittsburgh, P.A., he earned an

associate degree in forest technology and a bachelor's degree in recreation and parks management, both from Penn State University in 2000.

McElhone was an intern at Mount Mitchell State Park, before joining the state parks system in 2000 as a Park Ranger I at Hammocks Beach State Park. While at Hammocks Beach, McElhone served as a lead resource management ranger and was promoted to Park Ranger II. He is a certified environmental educator.

"Sean's knowledge and experience in natural resource



management should be invaluable at Fort Fisher, which is not only a very popular coastal park but an important habitat for rare species and a historic site," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "He is a good choice as a superintendent who must strike a balance between protecting resources and providing quality recreational opportunities."

McElhone said, "I'm very excited to get back to the coast where I started in the division, and I hope to build on the good work of the current staff and the former superintendents."

Fort Fisher State Recreation Area encompasses 287 acres. The park recorded 629,263 visits in 2005.

## DIVISION AWARD

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1*

in early 2005 to save a tract known as "World's Edge" for a new state park in the Hickory Nut Gorge area of Rutherford County, according to the nomination by Kieran Roe, executive director of the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, a land trust partner in the effort.

Roe presented the award to Lewis Ledford, division director.

"Director Ledford seized a very narrow window of opportunity to secure a major land acquisition for the new Hickory Nut Gorge State Park," Roe said. "The division made a steep financial commitment and put its trust in a local land trust with whom they had not previously dealt to move this new state park forward.

"Because of their leadership, the public will have access to stunning views, beautiful waterfalls and a richly diverse natural area."

"World's Edge," with its stunning scenic vistas and rare

geologic and natural communities, is the 1,568-acre centerpiece of the planned park authorized in 2005 by the General Assembly. The land became available in April 2005 with the death of the owner.

An out-of-state developer submitted an offer in early June to buy the property. Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy submitted an offer a few days later after working with The Nature Conservancy, the Open Space Institute and Self-Help Credit Union to raise \$16 million for the property.

"Director Ledford committed the division to backing the deal and pledged to find the funding from various sources to pay off the conservation organization's loans as quickly as possible," Roe explained. The state has already made good on the first part of its pledge to acquire part of the property by December 2005.

The purchase of the entire tract will involve the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the

Natural Heritage Trust Fund, and an application is before the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

In accepting the award, Ledford said, "When our partners such as the Conservation Trust honor the Division of Parks and Recreation in this fashion, they also honor themselves for their outstanding efforts for conservation every day in North Carolina."

"We applaud the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation's leadership in protecting such spectacular places as "World's Edge" for the benefit of all North Carolinians," said Reid Wilson, executive director of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and member of the award selection committee.

"Support from public agencies such as the Division of Parks and Recreation enables land trusts to use their expertise and strong relationships with willing landowners to save these places quickly."



# North Carolina State Parks

## Monthly Attendance Report

### April, 2006

PARK	APRIL 2006	TOTAL YTD APR. 2006	APRIL 2005	TOTAL YTD APR. 2005	% CHANGE (2005/2006)	
					APR.	YTD
Carolina Beach	25,563	63,906	20,796	67,640	23%	-6%
Cliffs of the Neuse	9,251	24,437	7,795	23,044	19%	6%
Crowder's Mountain	39,343	118,037	34,061	114,003	16%	4%
Eno River	30,450	91,507	30,040	95,454	1%	-4%
Falls Lake	81,541	167,287	70,055	143,270	16%	17%
Fort Fisher	52,802	166,593	57,546	168,136	-8%	-1%
Fort Macon	123,336	281,668	87,102	260,356	42%	8%
Goose Creek	11,169	31,779	14,062	40,770	-21%	-22%
Gorges	6,295	14,711	7,726	21,878	-19%	-33%
Hammocks Beach	10,731	28,596	9,738	28,689	10%	0%
Hanging Rock	42,278	97,768	25,908	68,193	63%	43%
Jockey's Ridge	100,920	174,342	67,100	150,630	50%	16%
Jones Lake	3,478	13,150	6,364	20,300	-45%	-35%
Jordan Lake	123,971	188,194	204,994	317,576	-40%	-41%
Kerr Lake	89,228	234,096	106,464	290,320	-16%	-19%
Lake James	44,588	101,778	46,560	119,373	-4%	-15%
Lake Norman	47,397	137,361	40,935	122,937	16%	12%
Lake Waccamaw	9,506	28,430	6,492	18,672	46%	52%
Lumber River	7,275	22,205	4,795	14,865	52%	49%
Medoc Mountain	4,981	12,985	3,592	10,086	39%	29%
Merchant's Millpond	20,810	53,610	21,584	59,048	-4%	-9%
Morrow Mountain	36,840	79,642	15,190	42,220	143%	89%
Mount Jefferson	4,384	14,880	5,428	16,756	-19%	-11%
Mount Mitchell	13,888	17,683	7,655	15,573	81%	14%
New River	17,806	34,650	6,101	21,395	192%	62%
Occoneechee Mountain	7,014	19,608	4,977	15,575	41%	26%
Pettigrew	8,126	19,958	6,285	18,220	29%	10%
Pilot Mountain	38,304	97,527	31,728	96,522	21%	1%
Raven Rock	10,778	31,619	12,598	35,390	-14%	-11%
Singletary Lake	3,110	10,640	2,982	9,602	4%	11%
South Mountains	20,406	56,482	22,114	62,480	-8%	-10%
Stone Mountain	41,688	99,512	31,380	86,188	33%	15%
Weymouth Woods	4,175	15,402	3,426	14,550	22%	6%
William B. Umstead	62,955	182,821	55,039	174,176	14%	5%
<b>SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>1,154,387</b>	<b>2,732,864</b>	<b>1,078,612</b>	<b>2,763,887</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>-1%</b>

# Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

**and**

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

## ***SAFETY ZONE***

### **TREAT EVERY INJURY THE RIGHT WAY**

- ✓ Know where first aid kits are located in the workplace.
- ✓ Clean and bandage small cuts and scrapes promptly; it's easier to prevent an infection than cure one.
- ✓ Post emergency phone numbers near every phone at work and at home.
- ✓ Take time to learn first aid, CPR and the Heimlich maneuver; a life could depend on you knowing what to do in an emergency.



### *The Steward*

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